

# Rejoinder Outlines: Social Media & Democracy

Resolved: Social Media is Harmful to Democracy.

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## **Rejoinder Outlines: Social Media & Democracy**

*Resolved: Social Media is Harmful to Democracy.*

### **PRO SIDE: HARMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO DEMOCRACY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this speech I will defend each of my team's arguments, but first, let's discuss the framework.

#### **FRAMEWORK**

Our value is Justice, and our criteria is on balance. We think you should prefer our framework because it is reasonable and fair to both sides. So, on balance, the team that best upholds justice should win this debate.

Now, I will defend our first argument... Harming Voters.

#### **PRO-01: Harming Voters**

*They said we were wrong about... Harming Voters*

*However, we were NOT wrong because...*

##### ***First... Misinformation Harms Voters***

*According to... Princeton University, September 30, 2022*

<https://www.princeton.edu/~grossman/Fake%20News.pdf>

[Gene M. Grossman, Professor of Economics, Princeton University, Electoral Competition with Fake News, European Journal of Political Economy, September 30, 2022, Vol. 77, Article 102215]

Original: Misinformation pervades political competition. We introduce opportunities for political candidates and their media supporters to spread fake news about the policy environment and perhaps about parties' positions into a familiar model of electoral competition. In the baseline model with full information, the parties' positions converge to those that maximize aggregate welfare. When parties can broadcast fake news to audiences that disproportionately include their partisans, policy divergence and suboptimal outcomes can result. We study a sequence of models that impose progressively tighter constraints on false reporting and characterize situations that lead to divergence and a polarized electorate.

*It states... fake news and misinformation spread lies about political issues, allowing political groups and media supporters to mislead voters, creating an unfair influence over elections.*

*This proves... it was incorrect for my opponent to say that social media helps democracy, because misinformation intentionally spreads lies that trick millions of voters into making choices based on false information instead of the truth.*

##### ***Also... Social Media Lowers Voter Knowledge***

*According to... Pew Research Center, February 22, 2021*

<https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2021/02/22/americans-who-mainly-get-news-via-social-media-knew-less-about-politics-and-current-events-heard-more-about-some-unproven-stories/>

[Amy Mitchell, Director of Journalism Research, *Americans Who Mainly Get News via Social Media Knew Less About Politics and Current Events, Heard More About Some Unproven Stories*, Pew Research Center, February 22, 2021]

Original: U.S. adults whose most common way of getting political and election news is social media lag behind Americans who turn to most other sources of news in their knowledge and understanding of national politics, current events and the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2019, for instance, Americans who turned to social media for news were among the least likely to correctly answer nine fact-based questions about political knowledge; these nine questions gauged respondents' knowledge about topics such as trends in unemployment, tariffs, the federal budget deficit and which party supports specific political positions. Fewer than a quarter (17%) of U.S. adults who relied most on social media for political and election news have high political knowledge, according to this index of knowledge questions. Another 27% have middle political knowledge, and a majority (57%) have low political knowledge.

*It states... people who mainly use social media for political news know less about national politics and current events compared to those who get news from other sources.*

*This proves... it was incorrect for them to say that social media helps people learn, because those users know a lot less about politics than people who use other sources, so voters don't make informed choices.*

*Therefore, we were not wrong about... social media harming voters.*

*The next argument I will defend is... Causing Violence.*

## **Rejoinder Outlines: Social Media & Democracy**

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### **PRO-02: Causing Violence**

*They said we were wrong about... Causing Violence*

*However, we were not wrong because...*

#### ***First... Encouraging Political Violence***

*According to... Brookings Institution, August 21, 2025*

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/political-violence-to-protect-american-democracy/>

Original: There are short- and long-term strategies that federal, state, and local officials—as well as other stakeholders—can implement to mitigate the risk of violence and harassment. These strategies include consistently enforcing relevant laws to address immediate threats, speaking out against agitators regardless of political affiliation, and tackling the root causes of political violence, both physical and psychological. Amid the federal government's recent cuts to programs aimed at reducing violent extremism, it is especially important for subnational and nongovernmental actors to provide funding, tools, and other resources to address the risks and counter the impacts of political violence. This includes the private sector, specifically the technology industry, which can do more to redesign social media features that are exploited by hostile actors, implement high-quality standards for threat assessment, and otherwise guard against political violence.

*It states...* violent groups and hostile users exploit social media to plan attacks, spread threats, and harm others for political reasons, turning online platforms into tools of intimidation and hate.

*This proves...* it was incorrect for them to say social media brings people together, because extremists use these platforms to spread violence and fear that discourage millions of citizens from safely voting and expressing their opinions.

#### ***Also... Spreading Hate and Violence***

*According to... Council on Foreign Relations, April 24, 2023*

<https://www.cfr.org/background/hate-speech-social-media-global-violence>

Original: Hate speech online has been linked to a global increase in violence toward minorities, including mass shootings, lynchings, and ethnic cleansing. Policies used to curb hate speech risk limiting free speech and are inconsistently enforced. Countries such as the United States grant social media companies broad powers in managing their content and enforcing hate speech rules. Others, including Germany, can force companies to remove posts within certain time periods. Introduction A mounting number of attacks on immigrants and other minorities has raised new concerns about the connection between inflammatory speech online and violent acts, as well as the role of corporations and the state in policing speech. Analysts say trends in hate crimes around the world echo changes in the political climate, and that social media can magnify discord. At their most extreme, rumors and invective disseminated online have contributed to violence ranging from lynchings to ethnic cleansing. The response has been uneven, and the task of deciding what to censor, and how, has largely fallen to the handful of corporations that control the platforms on which much of the world now communicates. But these companies are constrained by domestic laws. In liberal democracies, these laws can serve to defuse discrimination and head off violence against minorities. But such laws can also be used to suppress minorities and dissidents.

*It states...* hate speech and violent messages spread online have caused real attacks against minorities, showing how dangerous online lies and hate can become in the real world.

*This proves...* it was incorrect for them to say social media helps democracy, because hate speech online causes real violence against minorities, destroying safety and trust in communities worldwide.

*Therefore, we were not wrong about...* social media causing violence.

*So, for all these reasons, please vote for the PRO. Thank you.*

## **Rejoinder Outlines: Social Media & Democracy**

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### **CON SIDE: BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO DEMOCRACY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this speech I will defend each of my team's arguments, but first, let's discuss the framework.

#### **FRAMEWORK**

Our value is Justice, and our criteria is on balance. We think you should prefer our framework because it is reasonable and fair to both sides. So, on balance, the team that best upholds justice should win this debate.

Now, I will defend our first argument... Making Voices Heard.

#### **CON-01: Making Voices Heard**

*They said we were wrong about... Making Voices Heard*

*However, we were NOT wrong because...*

##### ***First... Increasing Political Participation***

*According to... Frontiers in Sociology, August 1, 2025*

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sociology/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1658996/full>

[Pradeep Nair, *Social Media and Political Participation: Unpacking the Role of Social Media in Contemporary Politics*, *Frontiers in Sociology*, August 1, 2025, Vol. 10, Article 1658996]

Original: The emergence of social media has altered how people will access and use news and information for participation and engagement in political discourse. The most preferred media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram have not only allowed people to participate in real-time discussions and debates but have also given them an edge to share and consume political content across time and geographical boundaries. It further empowered marginalized communities by allowing them to speak their opinions and interact with others who share their perspective without any compulsions.

*It states... social media allows people everywhere to take part in real-time debates, share ideas freely, and give a voice to groups that were often ignored; this includes minorities and women.*

*This proves... it was incorrect for my opponent to say that social media harms democracy, because these platforms allow millions of citizens around the world to join political discussions, stay informed, and make their voices heard in ways that strengthen democratic participation.*

##### ***Also... Improving Political and Social Engagement***

*According to... Pew Research Center, September 16, 2025*

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/09/16/42-of-social-media-users-say-the-sites-are-important-for-them-getting-involved-with-political-social-issues/>

[Eugene Park, 42% of Social Media Users Say the Sites Are Important for Them Getting Involved With Political, Social Issues, Pew Research Center, September 16, 2026]

Original: 42% of social media users say the sites are important for them getting involved with political, social issues. For some, social media is a place to engage with politics, whether it's to share information about protests or learn about candidates for office. But how valuable do Americans think social media is for them personally to get involved in issues and express their political opinions? Half of U.S. adult social media users say social media is very or somewhat important for them when it comes to finding others who share their views about important issues, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in February. Smaller shares say social media is important for getting involved with political or social issues that are important to them (42%) or giving them a venue to express their political opinions (34%).

*It states... many Americans see social media as a valuable place to share their opinions, join discussions, and get involved with political and social issues that matter to them.*

*This proves... it was a mistake for my opponent to say that social media harms people, because it is actually helping them to share ideas, work together, and to stand up for justice - just like the Black Lives Matter movement has done.*

*Therefore, we were not wrong about... social media making voices heard.*

*The next argument I will defend is... Holding Leaders Accountable.*

## Rejoinder Outlines: Social Media & Democracy

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### CON-02: Holding Leaders Accountable

They said we were wrong about... Holding Leaders Accountable

However, we were not wrong because...

#### ***First... Making leaders More Accountable***

*According to... Columbia University, November 5, 2024*

<https://knightcolumbia.org/blog/social-media-for-public-officials-2-0>

[Knight First Amendment Institute, *Social Media for Public Officials 2.0*, Columbia University, November 5, 2024]

Original: Government officials frequently use social media to communicate with their constituents and the general public. This is a good thing. Social media has made it easier for government officials to share information and to hear from ordinary citizens, and it has made it easier for ordinary citizens to hold officials accountable and communicate with one another about matters of public concern. When government officials use social media to carry out their work, they are bound by the First Amendment. A federal appeals court recognized this in a case brought by the Knight Institute against then-President Trump, and the Supreme Court recognized it more recently in a case called *Lindke v. Freed*. This means that, when officials open up social media posts made in their official capacities to comments by members of the public, the First Amendment forbids the officials from censoring these comments on the basis of viewpoint. Government officials can't block commenters, or hide or delete comments from those posts, unless they do so pursuant to reasonable and viewpoint-neutral policies that they enforce in a viewpoint-neutral manner.

*It states...* social media helps citizens communicate directly with government officials and hold them accountable while protecting free speech by preventing leaders from blocking or silencing opposing views.

*This proves...* it was incorrect for my opponent to say that social media weakens democracy, because it gives people the power to question leaders, share opinions openly, and make sure that the government is acting responsibly.

#### ***Also... Strengthening Government Accountability***

*According to... the Brookings Institution, September 2025*

<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PROSPECTS-FOR-CERTAIN-TIMES.pdf>

[Danielle Resnick & Landry Signé, *Prospects for Democratic Resilience in Africa During Uncertain Times*, Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings, September 2025]

Original: Specifically, we focus on three domains that are proxies for democratic resilience: vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability. Vertical accountability captures the mechanisms that allows citizens to hold leaders accountable, particularly through free, fair, and meaningful elections or political parties (Signé, 2018; Walsh, 2020; Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova, 2020). Horizontal accountability refers to the ability of other branches of government institutions to hold governments responsive via checks and balances (Signé, 2018; O'Donnell, 1998; Walsh, 2020). The concept implies that government institutions are independent, and no agency or branch becomes too powerful compared to the others (Signé, 2018). Diagonal accountability captures the ability of non-state actors, including media or civil society, to hold governments accountable, connecting and enhancing horizontal and vertical accountability (Signé, 2018; Walsh, 2020). Such non-state actors promote the responsiveness of government by "educating citizens, denouncing wrongdoing, and providing innovative policy, societal, and business solutions" (Signé, 2018) and by organizing protests, information campaigns, and other forms of engagement (Walsh, 2020).

*It states...* non-government groups like journalists, activists, and other organizations play an important role in holding leaders accountable by sharing information, exposing corruption, and organizing public action.

*This proves...* it was incorrect for my opponent to say that social media does not hold leaders accountable, because it actually helps these groups and the citizens to share information quickly, expose corruption, and organize campaigns to stop the abuses of power and protect democracy.

*Therefore, we were not wrong about...* social media holding leaders accountable.

*So, for all these reasons, please vote for the CON. Thank you.*